MASTER RICHARD.

I may say that I was brought up in the family, for it is now nigh on to thirty years since I came into it, and I was then a lusty youth of almost 20. It almost makes me tremble when I think of it to find that in a few months I shall be half a century old. Well, during those thirty years I've seen and known some startling things in the family, but nothing more so than what I'm about to tell.

Of course I use no real names, and I shall call my master Richard, though that was not at all his real name any more than that of the family was Stratton, which I shall call them. Master Richard Stratton's father was a very practical man, who had come from England as a boy, married a New York lady and made a large fortune as a merchant. He had but one child, a son, Master Richard, and of him he made an idol, especially after the death of his wife, who departed this life, beloved by all, when Master Richard was 5 years old.

I have said that Mr. Stration was a very practical man, and he showed it when he employed me, a stout and intelligent lad of 20, freshly arrived from a rural part of England, as a care-taker of Master Richard, then a handsome boy of 3 years old. French bonnes, fresh from Ireland, was not then in fashion, and it pleased Mr. and Mrs. Stratton to intrust Master Richard to me rather than to some half-witted nursemaid, and I am confident that they never regretted it.

How fond I became of that boy, and how well he deserved all the care and devotion I lavished on him! I taught him to ride, to jump and to drive, and, that I might teach them again to Master Richard, I learned to box and the use of the sword. I really felt as if that boy belonged to me, and I do believe that it was on my account that he should not be separated from me that his father employed a tutor and had Master Richard educated at home instead of sending him away to school; and, farther than that, when it came to college years he sent him to Columbia so that I had daily care of him, instead of to Harvard, which I knew was his first choice.

All these years passed away very rapidly, and I may say very happily, and Master Richard always treated me with the highest consideration, never allowing me to feel, for an instant, my inferiority, but, on the contrary, always placing before me his desire that I should uphold his and my own pride by acting as if I was a gentleman and the equal of any one, as long as I was honest and behaved myself. I was his own man and I felt it an honor. Before strangers he always called me Mr. Brown, but when alone he would call me Brown, and sometimes Bob, which latter cognomen I liked much the best.

But now comes the first opening of what I call the dark era. Master Richard graduated with high honors, and had chosen the law for his profession, since it seems that in this country every man, no matter what his wealth or tastes, must be something, and he began to study for it. Then it was that Master Richard fell in love. I knew it before his father did, and was the medium of correspondence, for the boy made a confidant of me in everything, and I did not hesitate in doing anything to forward it, feeling that the father must approve of the lady.

Miss Allie Sylvester was simply beautiful. She was of unimpeachable family, and for her age, which was only 19, was one of the pronounced belles of society. I knew that Master Richard was engaged to her, and he told me when he made his father acquainted with the fact, and soon afterward I found that it was whispered freely about. At first it was easy to be seen that Mr. Stratton was pleased with the match, though he hinted as much to me as to say that he thought his son too young to marry. Then, after the affair began to be well known, it was evident that there was some cloud lowering between father and son.

One day when Master Richard was out Mr. Stratton sent for me to come into the library and put me through the severest line of questioning I ever underwent in my life, and it was all about Miss Sylvester, and much of it, as I then thought, of a very curious kind, bearing, as it did, on my impressions of the lady's personal looks and conduct. I answered him as best I could, but he did not seem satisfied, and afterwards when I thought the matter over I got suspicion as to what he was driving at, and remembered that several times when I had been ordered to deliver a letter or message, personally to her, she had acted in a way that I thought a little strange, but as I attributed it to her being in love—though I was never that way myself—I thought nothing of it. Mr. Stratton gave me no orders to keep the interview with him secret, and so I told it to Master Richard who was at first very angry, but afterward laughed at it, though he made no explanation. A week later Master Richard came in very much excited and angry, and said to me:

"Bob, have you seen anything about Miss Sylvester when you have been there for me, that looked as though she had been using stimulants, either wine or opium?"

The question shocked me, and I was obliged to confess to him that I had noticed a singular levity in Miss Sylvester at times, but that I had never thought of attributing it to that cause until after his father had questioned me, and that I was not prepared now to pronounce it so. Then he said, the anger flashing out of his eyes:

"Do you know that Dr. Willsey, that old scrub, has dared to presume, because he has been our family doctor for 30 years, to come between my father and myself by telling him that Miss Sylvester is an irretrievable victim to stimulants, especially opium?"

"How did he know it, Master Richard?" I asked.

"He says he has known it for several years, and that he has had her several times under his treatment for it. It's a lie, but my father believed it, and even if it were true I'd marry her and trust to love afterward to cure her of the habit, if she had it."

I could not help approving this, though my heart misgave me, because I knew that Master Richard's whole life was absorbed in his love, and that without her that life would be a waste to him. Two or three times after this I saw that my boy was excited and almost wild with suppressed anger, but he did not speak until one evening some weeks after the last conversation, when he said to me:

"Bob, I am going to put a stop to this infamous slander. I have ordered a carriage to be here at 8 o'clock, and in the meantime you must pack my trunks and hold yourself ready to go with me. I shall marry Miss Sylvester to-night, and to-morrow I shall depart for Europe. I have written to my father, and he can forgive me or not as he pleases, but I'm not afraid of the final result."

I had nothing to do but to obey orders, and at 8 o'clock, when the carriage came, we are ready. Mr. Stratton was out—he generally was at that hour—at his club, and Master Richard laid the letter for him on the library table, and we drove away to a hotel, where he saw his trunks deposited in elegant rooms which he was as careful in selecting as though he and his bride were to inhabit them forever, instead of for a single day.

Then we drove to Miss Sylvester's residence. Her only parent was her mother, a scheming, fashionable woman, who, of course, favored the match, but whom Master Richard did not like, and had several times said to me that when he was married he intended to keep his wife as much away from her mother as possible. The two ladies were expecting us and were prepared. In ten minutes we were all on our way to the clergyman's. Miss Sylvester, her mother, Master Richard and the bridesmaid, Nannie, a Swiss girl, very pretty, but, I must say, I did not like her, though I can say without vanity that she had made plenty of advances to me. I was on the box with the driver.

How supremely beautiful did Miss Sylvester appear that evening in her plain traveling dress, as she stood up before the minister to be made Mrs. Richard Stratton. It was all over in a few minutes, and then she was a wife. Her mother tried to cry a little, but it was a failure, as was also Nannie's attempt. It was I that ought to have cried, and I would have had I been able to see a little into the future.

The marriage over, we drove back to the bride's mother's house, where we left that lady and took on board Mrs. Richard Stratton's trunks and returned to the hotel. There was no shadow upon that marriage, and it seemed as though they were as happy a couple as could be found anywhere; for though Master Richard had married against his father's consent he had not to depend on Mr. Stratton for money. He had a very fine income of his own, left him perfectly uncontrolled by his mother, and the bride also had property of her own, left by her father. Besides that, I had savings of about 600 pounds sterling, which I drew from bank and took with me in case of emergency.

"I gave the governor a chance to come and see me or send for me this morning, Bob," said Master Richard, when we got on board the steamer for Southampton, "but he's mad and won't come. Well, I can't help it," and Master Richard laughed lightly.

We had a delightful trip, and I am sure nothing could have been so absurd as any suspicion that the story Dr. Willsey told had any truth in it. To be sure she was lively, but not any more so than any young bride ought to be who has a young, handsome and rich husband whom she loves and who is devoted to to her. It was not until we had arrived in London and been there two weeks, that I saw anything that looked wrong, and then it was one day when Master Richard had gone out to dine with some American friends, and sent me back—I always went everywhere with him—to get some letters that he wanted.

I found Mrs. Richard, whom he had left an hour before perfectly right, under an influence, either of morphine or wine, that was plainly perceptible. Nannie was frightened and began to beg me not to tell Master Richard, and to declare that she could not help it. I promised to say nothing and to detain Master Richard as long as I could, and charged her to do all she could to make her mistress sober. But why dwell on this terrible episode in my life? We went to Paris, to Madrid, to Rome, to Naples, to Vienna, to Berlin, and then back to Paris to stay. Every day and every place made it more apparent that Dr. Willsey had been right, and that all Master Richard could do was useless. Get the terrible drug or stimulant she would in some way. I ventured one day to suggest to Master Richard that he should place her in some asylum, but I never even hinted at it again, for his response was a dreadful rebuke. Death, he said, rather than that. Then I spoke plainly about Nannie as pandering to her mistress's appetite and suggested her discharge, but this I saw was folly. It would be out of the frying-pan into the fire.

I saw its terrible effect on my mistress, but more on Master Richard. He gave up all society, and watched her like a child. He was haggard and nervous and no longer like himself. Then came a new phase of the terror. Denied the deadly poison at home, she, with the cunning of a maniac, as she was, would steal away from her watchers and remain away, at first, for hours, then for all day, then all night, and be brought home by the police, draggled and without reason. Then, at last, when Master Richard had almost concluded to place her in an asylum, with what seemed to be an instinct of the intention, she disappeared altogether, and every effort of the police and detectives failed to obtain any trace of her, notwithstanding the large reward.

Master Richard was crazed, and so was I almost. The police coolly declared that she would never be seen again alive; that the strongest probability was that the Seine would eventually give her up. The only theory to combat this was that Mrs. Richard had worn a fortune in diamonds when she went away, something she had never done before, and which seemed to show that she had prepared herself to stay away.

A month elapsed, and one morning Master Richard was notified that the body of his wife was at the morgue. We want there instantly, and, in spite of the fact that the body had been so long in the water, identified it. She was dressed in plain black, trimmed with lace, when she went away, but the lace was gone; she was shoeless and bonnetless and had not a shred of jewelry; even her rings were gone, and her earrings had been torn from her ears. The police said that it was a case of robbery, perhaps murder, and the poor, mutilated, disfigured body found its resting-place in Pere la Chaise. Nannie, with more money than she had ever possessed before in her life, was sent to her Swiss home, and Master Richard and I bent our steps toward New York.

I have forgotten to say that all the trouble between Master Richard and his father had been made up. The old man could not bear the absence of his son, and was pleading for Master Richard to bring his wife home as soon as he could, not knowing anything about why Master Richard could not, nor yet, when he was notified of the death, of the cause of it.

The next three years of our lives were quiet. Mrs. Richard had made a will immediately after her marriage, bequeathing all her property to Master Richard, but he would have none of it. He made it all over to her mother, and after that was consummated, refused to see Mrs. Sylvester again.

After these three years Master Richard's father began to fret. He wanted to see his son married again, and he had picked out a wife for him. The lady was a great beauty and had always been a great pet of the old man, as she had been of Master Richard before he fell in love with Miss Sylvester, and I always used to think she really loved him. To make a long story short, they were married, and a more quiet, happy couple I never saw. A year elapsed and an interesting event was about to happen. The doctor was in the house, not Willsey, and Master Richard expected every moment to become a father.

Almost at this critical moment there came a violent ring at the street door-bell and it was announced to me that a woman demanded to see Master Richard, and, though she had been told she could not, had insisted on forcing her way in, and was then coming through the hall. I was in the library, and went out to meet this woman. The gas was turned low, but if it had been darkness itself I would have known her. Good heaven! it was Mrs. Richard risen from the dead, old, haggard, bleared and ragged. She was almost at the library door when I met her, and heard her gasp out, "Brown, where's your master?"

Hardly had she uttered the word when she staggered and fell, rolling over on her back. I was so frightened that I was not only speechless, but paralyzed. The footman came up, and the terror of the situation recalled me to myself. I ordered him to assist me, and between us we raised the woman and carried her into the library, laying her upon the sofa. Then I told the footman to go up to the doctor, and whisper to him to come down stairs, but not to let Mr. Richard know anything about it, but in less than five minutes, before the doctor got down, I saw that the woman was dead, and so the doctor pronounced her. In a cold, professional way, he asked me if I knew the woman. I said I did not. Did my master? I said I thought not.

He sat down to the table, wrote a certificate that the woman had died of heart disease, turned to the footman who stood by horror-stricken, gave him the address of an undertaker not far away and his message, telling the man to use his name, and went back to his charge upstairs, following my injunction not to say anything to Master Richard. In half an hour the undertaker's wagon was at the door, and a few minutes later, as the living was ushered into the world upon one floor, the coffined dead was carried out from the floor below.

The next morning I told Master Richard the story of the night before, and together we went to the undertaker's and looked upon the dead woman. There could be no doubt about the identification this time, though there was nothing about her to recognize but a single ring, the wedding ring, and the wreck of her great beauty. Where she had been in all those four years, how she had found her way back and who the woman was that sleeps in Pere le Chaise will remain a sealed book forever.

The Eucalyptus in Australia.

[Melbourne Cor. Courier-Journal.]

Australia has a vegetation that is peculiarly and emphatically its own. Belonging to the myrtle family they form a distinct class of trees, with distinctive features peculiar to no other part of the globe. These are known here as the gum tree, and to botanists as the eucalyptus. There are about 150 distinct species, which form four-fifths of the vegetation of the country. Wherever you travel you come across the eucalyptus. On the arid plains are found the dwarf species, and on the mountain slopes and undulating lands they form gigantic forests. They shed their bark annually, but not the leaves, which are evergreen and very abundant.

The leaf has a peculiar action of turning one or the other side constantly to the sun, and while this affords poor shade, an operation of absorption and exhalation is constantly going on that is fatal to malaria. The leaves are full of oil cells, 100 pounds of them yielding from twenty to sixty ounces of a volatile oil. This oil has valuable medicinal qualities, and parties here in Victoria, who have a patent process for extracting the same, have the most valuable "oil well" in the world.

The different varieties of the eucalyptus furnish the commercial timber of the colony. The blue gum is a hard, light-colored timber of greater strength and tenacity than either the English oak or the Indian teak, and is chiefly used in heavy building and for piers and bridges. The red gum is also hard wood, with short-curled grain, and is used for ship-building, railway sleepers and wagon wheels, and is especially valuable for salt-water piers, as it contains a peculiar acid that resists the attacks of the sea-worm.

Equal to the Occasion.

[Paris Paper.]

Scene in the Chinese war:

Captain of ironclad to artilleryman—Do you see that Chinese general there, about three miles off? Let him have one of those eight-inch shells in the eye.

Artilleryman, equal to the situation—Aye, aye, sir. Which eye, your honor?"

Victor Hugo: Youth, with gentleness, has upon old men the effect of sunshine without wind.

DICKENS' CHARACTERISTICS.

His Habits at Home—Aversion to Good Bye—His "Readings."

[Mamie Dickens in Youth's Companion.]

His punctuality was a remarkable characteristic, and visitors used to wonder how it was that everything was done to the very minute. It is a common saying now in the family of some dear friends, where punctuality is not quite so well observed. "What would Mr. Dickens have said to this?" or "Ah! my dear child, I wish you could have been at Gad's Hill to learn what punctuality means!" He was very fond of music, but not of "classical" music only. He loved national airs, old tunes, songs and ballads. He was easily moved by anything pathetic in a song or tune, and was never tired of hearing his particular favorites sung or played. He liked to have music of an evening, and duets used to be played very often four hours together, while he would read, or walk up and down the room.

There was a large meadow at the back of the garden in which, during the summer-time, many cricket matches were held. Although never playing himself, Charles Dickens delighted in the game, and would sit in his tent, keeping account for one side, the whole day long. He never took to croquet, but had lawn-tennis been played in the Gad's Hill days, he would certainly have enjoyed this game. He liked "American bowls," at which he used constantly to play with his male guests. For one of his "improvements," he had turned a waste piece of land into a croquet-ground and bowling-green. In the meadow he used also to practice many of his "readings;" and any stranger passing down the lane, and seeing him gesticulating and hearing him talking, laughing, and sometimes it may be, weeping, most surely would have thought him out of his mind. The getting up of those "readings" gave him an immense amount of labor and fatigue, and sorrowful parts tried him greatly. For instance, in the reading of "Little Dombey," it was hard work for him to steel his heart as to be able to read the death without breaking down, or displaying too much emotion. He often told how much he suffered over this story, and how it would have been impossible for him to have gone through with it had he not kept constantly before his eyes the picture of his own "Plorn," alive and strong and well.

His great neatness and tidiness have already been alluded to, as also his wonderful sense of order. The first thing he did every morning, before going to work, was to make a circuit of the garden, and then go over the whole house, to see that everything was in its place, neat and orderly.

This was also the first thing he did upon his return home, after any absence. A more thoroughly orderly nature never existed. It must have been through this gift of order that he was enabled to make time, notwithstanding any amount of work, to give the minutest household details. Before a dinner-party, the menu was always submitted to him for approval, and he always made a neat little plan of the table with the names of guests marked in their respective places and a list of who was to take who in to dinner. He had constantly some "bright idea" or other as to the arrangement of the table or rooms.

He had a strange aversion to saying good-bye, and would do anything he possibly could to avoid going through the ordeal.

In a letter to a friend Charles Dickens writes.

"Another generation begins to peep above the table. I once used to think what a horrible thing it was to be a grandfather. Finding that the calamity falls upon me without perceiving any other change in myself, I bear it like a man."

But as he so disliked the name of grandfather as applied to himself, these grandchildren were taught by him to call him "Venerables." And to this day some of them still speak of him by his self-invented name. Now, there is another and younger family who never knew "Venerables," but who are taught to know his likeness, and taught to know his books through the pictures in them, as soon as they can be taught anything, and whose baby hands lay bright flowers upon the stone in Westminster abbey, every 9th of June, and every Christmas Eve.

For, in remembrance of his love for all that is gay in color, none but the brightest flowers—and also some of the gorgeous American leaves, sent by a friend for the purpose—are laid upon the stone, making that one spot, in the midst of the vast and solemn building, bright and beautiful.

In a letter to "Plorn," before his departure for Australia, Charles Dickens writes: "I hope you will always be able to say in after life, that you had a kind father." And to this hope, each one of his children can answer with a loving, graceful heart, Amen.

Imagination.

[John Swinton's Paper.]

"It is in our imagination we are thus and thus." So says the unknown author of the "Unknown City," and with truth.

The other day I was creeping sidewise, with my face to the wall, into Breiser's 25-cent dinner restaurant. Plume our pride as we may, there is something about a 25-cent five-course dinner that would strain the philosophy of Diogenes. I felt, to confess the truth, as meek as Moses. As I was trying to make up in appetite what I lost in pride, I caught sight of a gentleman at a table opposite, who had decked himself in a well-worn full-dress suit, with a flower in his buttonhole, and his hair barbered to glossy perfection. And I verily believe it was for nothing but to appear in state at this restaurant. Every mouthful he took seemed to invite the admiration of the whole city, and the air with which he read the general paper would have served as a model for a stage king. After sipping his coffee sublimely, he rose, walked to the bar and paid his quarter with the conscious look of a man who is taking a controlling part in affairs, and then marched off. "That man," I thought, "gets more enjoyment out of his quarter than Vanderbilt out of his millions"

Paper bottles are now used extensively in Paris.